



Photo Credit Tommy Collier

GIFT ANNOUNCEMENT

Nicholas R. Petry Boardroom named in honor of National Western Giant



Photo Credit National Western Archives



Photo Credit Jenny Marvin

As I've said many times, one of the best things about chairing the Honoring the Legacy campaign for the new National Western Center is hearing the stories behind the many gracious donations we've received. That's never been truer than with the one behind the Legacy Building's Nicholas R. Petry Boardroom, which was made official earlier this week.

There's a short version of this story and there's a longer one. In brief: a \$1 million bequest from former National Western President and CEO Nick Petry has been waiting for the right moment for deployment since Nick's passing in 1999. That moment has arrived, and with a few additional contributions, the Western Stock Show Association's corporate boardroom will forever be named after a man whose foresight helped the National Western not just survive, but thrive.

And now for the longer version, which I think will be worth your time.

Nick's experience with the Stock Show began in the 1920s, when he entered a pigeon and some chickens for judging as a young boy. Whether Nick's fowl had the right stuff or not has been lost to history; certain is that in 1962 he was elected to what's now called the Western Stock Show Association board of directors (then the executive committee) and became the seventh National Western president in 1966. Presiding over that 1966 meeting was Ned Grant, father of my friend Pat Grant, the longtime National Western President & CEO and, later, Western Stock Show Association chairman.

By then Nick was a partner in the N. G. Petry Construction Co., owner of the Grizzly Ranch in North Park, and on the boards of the Denver Union Stockyard Co., Public Service Co. (today part of Xcel Energy), and Colorado National Bank. He was well-known and well-respected even before he took over National Western leadership.

Nick was a visionary, "looking five to 20 years down the trail," as one chronicler put it. One of his early initiatives was to renegotiate what had been a year-to-year lease of the Coliseum for each January's Stock Show into a long-term agreement. It was signed in October 1968 – a 30-year deal that invested the city and county of Denver in the Stock Show and ensured the future expansion and improvement of the National Western Complex we're now working hard to transform into the new and improved National Western Center.

A year later, Nick – who was as hard-nosed at the negotiating table as he was soft-spoken everywhere else – hammered out a deal with the Denver Union Stockyard Company that gave National Western the right to lease and ultimately buy the 22 acres of land now known as the Yards. Without that agreement, which had taken three years to negotiate, the Yards would surely have been sold off for other uses.

Nick also spearheaded a \$2.5 million capital campaign launched in 1970 (that's about \$17 million in today's dollars). Its proceeds built the heart of the National Western Complex we're redeveloping with our campaign a half century hence. Suffice it to say that, without Nick's vision, energy, and determination, the National Western might well have ceased to be.

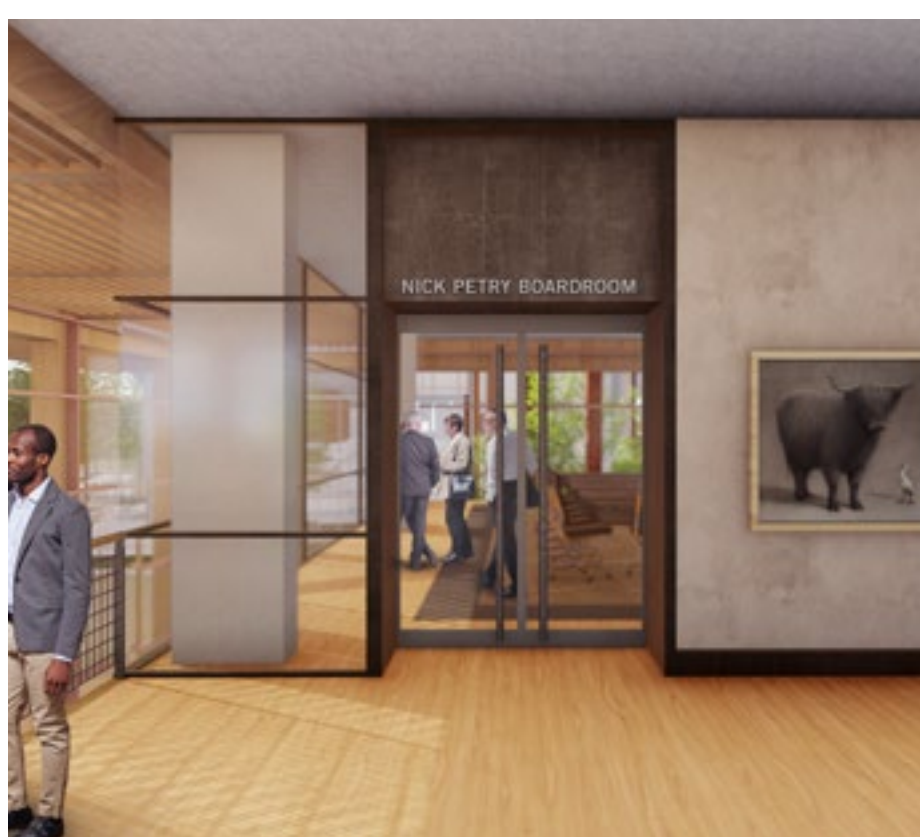
Nick had become the WSSA's chairman by the time Pat Grant took over as President and CEO. As Pat put it, "Nick never told me what to do. He always suggested that I might look at another approach or another perspective. He watched me make a mistake or two, I know, but he let those pass knowing that I would learn from those mistakes. That's the kind of leader he was."

In spring 1999, Nick's health was failing. He asked Pat to come by the house. He offered Pat a Coors beer. Then he said, "I want to talk to you about my plans. I want to make a contribution to the National Western."

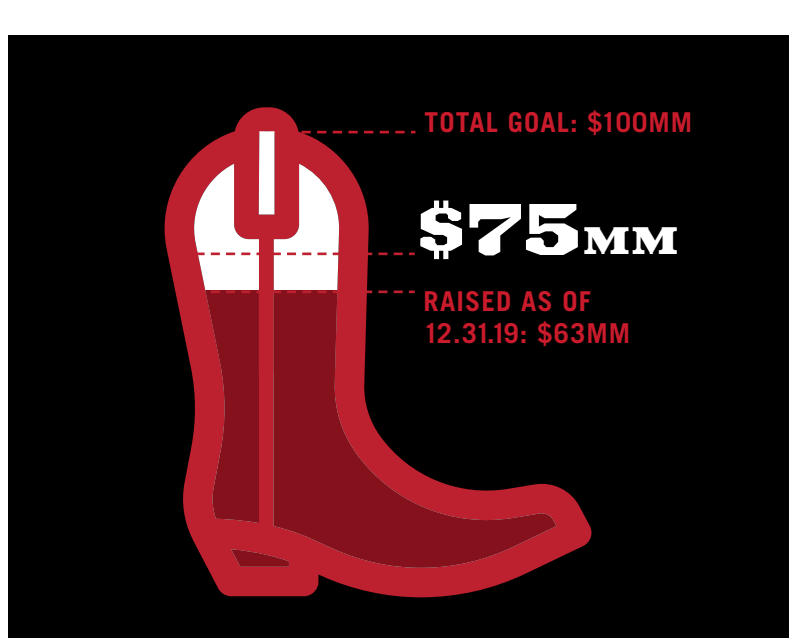
In particular, Nick was concerned about the state of the Complex's buildings. He told Pat he would leave National Western a bequest of \$1 million to be used for future redevelopment. On July 21, 1999, Nick passed away. Nancy, his wife, saw to it that Nick's wishes were followed, and so did Pat. He had the money placed in a special reserve account and invested it such that, when the time came, it would be worth even more.

The time has finally come. Pat recognized the new WSSA boardroom in the Legacy Building as the perfect place to honor the man whose boardroom decisions had been so decisive for the National Western, and Nancy agreed. Pat, Tim Travis and I, along with Mike Cervi and Nancy's dear friend Bea Taplin, chipped in to round out the balance. Twenty years after Nick's bequest, I'm thrilled to announce that we're naming that space the Nicholas R. Petry Boardroom in perpetuity.

Thank you for your support of our campaign to secure the future of the National Western.



GOALS FOR 01.31.20



For questions about the campaign or making a gift, please contact

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For news, updates and more on the Honoring the Legacy campaign for the National Western, visit

honoringthelegacycampaign.com